

OUR COUNTRY'S SIN.

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# S E R M O N

PREACHED TO THE MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

OF

THE NESTORIAN MISSION,

AT

OROOMIAH, PERSIA,

JULY 3, 1853.

BY

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MISSIONARY OF THE A. B. C. F. M.

NEW-YORK:

H. B. KNIGHT, 48 BEEKMAN STREET.

1854.

TO THE  
REV. LEONARD BACON, D.D.,

A FRIEND OF THE MISSIONARY, AND A FRIEND OF THE SLAVE.

THIS SERMON

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THE

AUTHOR.

# S E R M O N .

JOHN 7:48.

HAVE ANY OF THE RULERS OR OF THE PHARISEES BELIEVED ON HIM?

THE rulers and the Pharisees were the repositories of influence among the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's sojourn among men. The former had attained this eminence by means of the civil authority which, in the low state of the national morals, they wielded far more for purposes of oppression and personal aggrandizement than to protect injured justice and promote the public weal; while the influence of the latter had been secured through their arrogated sanctity, more hypocritical than real, by working on the popular reverence, superstition, or fears, in connection with the corrupt priesthood, who were never slow to coöperate with them in arts of imposition and religious despotism.

Still theirs was *a dominant influence*, however unworthily acquired and exerted; and as is the case in better lands and better times, it exercised a controlling and unquestioned sway, where it ought to have been rigidly canvassed, judged, and condemned.

The interrogatory of our text was addressed by some of those conceited and self-constituted arbiters of opinion at that time, to the officers of the chief priests and Pharisees, who had been dispatched to apprehend the Saviour. On hearing him speak "as never man spake," those officers were convinced of the truth in their own consciences, which were less seared, and in their understandings, which were less warped, than those of their employers; and they had returned without the hunted victim. And the Pharisees said, "Why have ye not brought him?" The officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." Then answered them the Pharisees, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

1. It is obvious to remark, from the case before us, that the sway of influence, exercised by those in power and rank, is *mighty*. With what

complacent assurance is the interrogatory in our text propounded: "Have any of the *rulers* or of the *Pharisees* believed on him?" As if this were the end of all strife on the subject—paramount to argument—ignoring fact—and even setting aside miracles. And we marvel at the noble independence of the high-minded Nicodemus, who rose so far above the servility of his age, and the tyranny of his sect, as to interpose for poor suffering common honesty and common sense, in this connection. "Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) [that is, one of the Pharisees,] Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

Fortunately for the world, there have always been here and there individuals, who have stood out as exceptions in the dominant ones of their sect and their time, rising above the power of human influence, and asserting the higher claims of truth and right, in spite of the frowns and rebukes of rank and station. Honored be the name of Nicodemus for daring thus to interpose, though the influence of his sect was so overpowering that he must needs go to Jesus by night, for fear of the Jews.

2. It is obvious, to remark further, that the sway of influence may be as *blind* as it is powerful. In the instance we are contemplating, on what ground did the influence rest? Simply on the ringing and reiteration of names and titles. "Have any of the *rulers* or of the *Pharisees* believed on him?" In fact, the power of its sway is often much in proportion to its *blindness*. How long in that case, and, we may say, in most similar cases, would it have stood before the light of careful and candid examination? Even the single pertinent inquiry of the independent Nicodemus, "Doth the law judge any man before it hear him?" etc., seems to have impressed his gainsayers with such a consciousness of the *weakness* of their *power*, so far as argument is concerned, that it soon silenced them; for it is forthwith recorded of them, that "every man went unto his own house."

3. It is further obvious to remark, in view of the case we are contemplating, that the sway of influence may be as *tyrannical* as it is blind and powerful. What could have been more overbearing, despotic, and vindictive, than the language of those haughty Pharisees, to the officers who had honestly forborne to arrest the Saviour! "Have any of the *rulers* or of the *Pharisees*, believed on him?" Just as if *they*, and their *sect*, had the right to arrogate to themselves the province of thought and opinion, and deprive all others of that high prerogative, given by God to every human being! And then, by a transition as natural as it is rapid, they pass from their lofty assumption to its not unsuita-

ble concomitant — *anathema* — as its most appropriate support. “This *people*, who knoweth not the law, is accused.” Was ever tyranny more monstrously glaring than this tyranny of influence? As matter of fact, how much better did those unread officers—and it may be, the mass of the Jewish peasants of that period, appreciate the high claims of God’s law, than their selfish, despotic, hypocritical rulers, scribes and Pharisees!

4. It is obvious, to remark further, in view of the case before us, that the sway of human influence is very *liable to be wielded against truth and righteousness*. In this instance, it was directed against the best of beings, and the holiest of causes. The blessed Saviour himself was the doomed victim it murderously pursued; and his kingdom of light, mercy, truth, and salvation, was the cause it would crush and smother at its dawn. And this kingdom, from that day to the present, has ever found its most deadly antagonists among the rulers and the Pharisees—who have not believed on him, or whose influence, if they have believed, has been so leavened with the love of the world, that it had been far better for that cause to have simply leaned on Jesus’ bosom, a persecuted outcast in the world, than to have been rocked and caressed by such doubtful friends, from the royal cradle of Constantine downward. Verily, the kingdom of Christ “is not of this world.”

If such may be the character of the sway of human influence, it is clear that the *Christian* has great reason to suspect it, and to beware how he implicitly follows it in principle and in practice. In view of its history in past ages, whether under a Jewish or a Christian dispensation, he has much reason in any given case, to suspect it, *à priori*, as erring and evil.

Shall then the believer repudiate the influence of his time, or the example of preceding ages, and set up for himself—adopting his own standards of principle and of morals—rendering himself singular—turning radical—in the common estimation, *running mad*—and contributing to turn the world upside down? I reply, that he should not do this unnecessarily. There is no merit in courting singularity for its own sake. No good will result from a reckless disregard of the opinions and feelings of mankind—certainly, so far as they are right, or harmless. But the *Christian* has a more sure word of prophecy to adopt and to follow, than human influence, whereunto he doeth well to take heed. The word and the TESTIMONY are his only lawful oracle, on all subjects and at all times. From this oracle he can never swerve with a good conscience or with safety, whithersoever it may point him, though the rulers, and the Pharisees, and the chief priests, of the whole world frown upon him; though he find himself, like Daniel, a solitary worshiper of the God of heaven; and though his daring to be singular in

this, threaten to cast him into a den of lions. I repeat, the *Christian* has the revealed word of God as his unerring standard of principle, of duty, and of action; and not man nor angel has the power to absolve him from a strict and habitual allegiance to that standard. The Christian who adheres to that standard will be very likely often to part company with the rulers and the Pharisees, as his divine Master did before him; and he may always justly suspect that company, at least rigidly canvass it, whenever it is tendered for his acceptance.

We would gladly feel compelled to look back to the corrupt Jews who lived eighteen centuries ago, or to distant ends of the earth, to the furthest possible remove from ourselves and our beloved native land, at this day, for practical illustration of the mighty, the blind, the tyrannical and the misdirected sway of human influence. But, alas, the middle of the nineteenth century is the period, and the dear land of our fathers is the theater, when and where this subject is exhibited in a manner as affecting — nay, as appalling, as has perhaps been the case, since Jesus was thus hunted by the rulers and Pharisees who believed not on him, and who wielded the power of their influence to prevent others from believing on him. And at this hallowed hour, on this sacred day preceding our nation's birth-day, when the din of its joyous celebration, not unmingled with the clank of the sable captive's chain, is ready to burst forth, hardly able to wait the waning watches of holy time, proudly to echo and reverberate from ocean to ocean, — I trust it will not be deemed inappropriate that we, in our distant missionary exile, direct a thought to that land far away, and that we drop a tear over its guilt and its danger, and lift to heaven our feeble prayer for its salvation, as well as thank God for all that his distinguishing favor and blessing have made it and done for it.

We need make few protestations of our Christian and filial patriotism. No American heart throbs more warmly and tenderly than the missionary's, with the love of his native country. His honest language in regard to it habitually is, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." The very ardor, sincerity, and depth of our love of country, however, should, and they doubtless do, lead us as heartily to deplore its sins, as gratefully to glory in its superiority over all other lands.

You have anticipated the brief reference I would make, in this connection, to our country's sin and our country's shame, *American Slavery*. On a subject so familiar to us all, I shall attempt to say nothing new; but as the season suggests the theme, and none can doubt that it claims our deep concern, our fervent prayers, and it may be, our feeble efforts, I may be allowed to allude to a few points in regard to the subject,

which may stir up our minds, by way of remembrance, though they be things already quite familiar to us.

I hold, among others, the following *theses*, on the subject of American slavery, which if I do not now establish, it is not for the want of ample proofs at hand, but because their truth is too evident to the minds of those before me, to require argumentation.

I. *I hold that American slavery is the crowning abomination of the present age.*

A "stupendous wrong" was the mildest term by which the "Albany Convention," one of the largest, most intelligent, and most estimable convocations of clergymen and Christian brethren ever assembled in America, could designate this evil, last fall; and hardly less emphatic and condemnatory were the epithets applied to the system by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, convened in Charleston, South Carolina, nearly thirty years ago,\* before the raising of cotton had become so lucrative, and the system so commercially and politically involved, and when its enormities were more courageously looked in the face, more frankly acknowledged and more faithfully reprobated, by that great, excellent, and influential church, than is done at this day. This is good testimony; but the palpable facts, on this subject, must themselves carry conviction to any unprejudiced mind that contemplates them for a moment. Think of the most enlightened, the most free, and the most favored nation under heaven, — and in some respects the most religious and the most benevolent people on the face of the earth, holding more than three millions of their fellow men in iron bondage — a bondage that reduces man to a chattel — annuls the marriage relation, and brings in its train the innumerable miseries, sufferings, and sins which these two conditions of it (to mention no others) involve and must readily suggest to our minds; — and all this, in the face of the political axiom, blazing up at the threshold of our national Constitution, that "all men are created equal," to say nothing of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, "love thy neighbor as thyself," which a *Christian* people is of course bound to follow, in its legislation and its practice.

II. *I hold that American slavery is the greatest human obstacle to the spread and triumph of Christianity that exists at the present period.*

This would naturally follow from the preceding position, the crowning abomination of the age being, almost as matter of course, the mightiest hindrance to the spread of the Gospel. But it will be more clearly apprehended as such, by a moment's reflection. The system itself *begins* by denying the Gospel to three millions of souls for whom Christ died.

\* See Appendix.

I am aware that it may be urged, that many of these souls receive the Gospel, and embrace it, in their bondage; and I gratefully admit the fact; but we must have in mind, that this is not owing to the merits of that system, — but is in spite of it. The holy and heavenly influences of Christianity rally around many a poor African, and, like the good Samaritan, pour oil and wine into his bleeding wounds to some extent, even under the frowns, the maledictions, and often the flagellations of “men-stealers” who have stripped and wounded him. The Christian and self-sacrificing efforts of some pious masters, in circumstances so embarrassing, are above all praise, but no justification of the system.

But it is not three millions of slaves alone that are, as a mass, virtually deprived of the kindly influences of the Gospel, by American slavery. Think of the depressing, the paralyzing, and the petrifying effects of the system on the hearts of masters and overseers, and of the degrading influence of it on the entire Southern population; nay, rather on the population of our whole country; for it is obvious to observe, that an American, even a Northern abolitionist, has a *modified* abhorrence of slavery, compared with that of an Englishman, less familiar with the debasing relation in any form, and untrammelled on the subject by conflict with his patriotism. And can this appalling national degradation, hampering the ministry and the religious press, and thus turning the edge of the sword of the Spirit, can it thus *exist*, and not prove a mighty hindrance to the progress of the Gospel at home? Is not our entire country — the whole American church, in a sickly, morbid moral state, certainly on that subject, and more or less so on others? Are not even the free portions of it in a condition analogous to that of the criminal Roman soldier, doomed to carry the corpse of his executed comrade bound upon his back, till he too was often overpowered, and fell under the rotting carcass?

Nowhere in the wide world, probably, has *mammon*, for instance, a stronger sway at this hour than in America. Nor is it strange, among men, or in proximity to them, who can in the light of the present period reckon human blood and sinews as *chattels*, and eagerly amass wealth by the sweat, the tears, and the groans of their fellow men in bondage. But Americans, no more than Jews and heathens, can worship God *and* mammon.

But the influence of American slavery is not felt alone in our own country. It is a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men — and a most mortifying spectacle. That land which, from its ennobling history and exalted privileges, should be the glory of all lands, emphatically *Immanuel's land*, a mountain of holiness and a habitation of righteousness, whose light should blaze upward and onward unobstructed — a moral sun — melting the chains of oppression and despotism, and dis-



persing the darkness and death-shadow of every false religious system the wide world around, really stands forth, presenting the puzzling — the appalling anomaly, of pure Protestant Christianity, republican freedom, unexampled general prosperity and progress, and iron servitude, combined more monstrously than the discordant sections of Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic image, confounding and astounding the gazing nations, who *would* look to America for a hope of deliverance! Have we not reason to fear, that our country thus does as much to hinder, as to advance, the progress of the Gospel beyond its own borders?

Think too of the schisms and the alienations among Christians which American slavery creates, in our own country, and throughout Protestant Christendom. How much stronger is the bond of connection, which the supporters of that dark system find in it, with each other, both within and without the Church, than many professing Christians, in different sections of our country, and of different views on this subject, in the same sections, find practically in their relation to a common Saviour!

And then, beyond the ocean, who of us can be ignorant of the fact, that both in England and in Germany, and other Protestant States of the Continent, the best Christians find it difficult to extend to the American churches the right hand of fellowship, and to coöperate with them against a common enemy, feeling compelled, and not without some reason, to regard them as all involved, directly or indirectly, in the sin of slavery?

How lamentably are the forces of Protestantism thus weakened, and its glory obscured! And how can the Church of Christ, thus divided, thus warned, shine forth in her strength, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners?

I have sometimes said to the Nestorians, that Popery — Anti-christ — is the greatest obstacle now existing to the progress of the Gospel. But I apprehend that American slavery, *in all its bearings*, may be even a greater obstacle.

III. *I hold that Northern influence — and primarily the influence of Northern Christians, is the strongest and the most responsible support of American slavery, at this time.*

This, I am aware, is a serious charge. But those familiar with the facts on the subject, can hardly doubt that it has foundation. The Church is set as the light of the world, and if its light be darkness, how great is that darkness! Yet is it not the "New-York Observers," and the "solid men of Boston," who are the first and the most earnest to rally and apply a healing balm, whenever the monster slavery receives a wound from some heaven-directed arrow? The general apathy of the mass of Northern Christians on the evils of slavery, and the lively sympathy of too many with that system, are the darkest aspect of the evil at

this hour — the most lulling and soporific to the Southern conscience, and thus the most discouraging in regard to its future removal or mitigation — the most dishonorable in the view of civilized nations — the most provoking in the sight of Heaven — and the most threatening to the prosperity, if not to the continuance, of our great American republic. How many infidels and skeptics are made by these causes in our own country; and how many scoffers and tyrants are thus armed and fanolied against freedom and Protestantism, throughout the world!

Contemplate the position of such influential papers as the *New-York Observer* and the *Journal of Commerce* — the former well styled, "the leading religious journal of America," at least retrospectively, and both in the hands of sons of sainted New-England pastors! Look also at a truly venerable divine, in New-York, a son of another sainted Puritan clergyman, putting forth such a sermon as the last in his series, entitled, "*First Things*," and really, what is there to hope on this subject, from the mass of Christians and patriots, in the Northern States?

And, to come still nearer home, (as most of us are from New-England,) look into a Sabbath Eulogy of the great Daniel Webster, from the pen of a very estimable clergyman of Boston, that Puritan city, (in general, a very interesting and excellent sermon,) and read the following period: "Let the land have a Sabbath, with regard to this subject, [slavery:] and let that Sabbath be the long — long days of our mourning for this great patriot — our country's friend."

A *Sabbath* — a long, *long* Sabbath, on the subject of American slavery! We give the estimable author full credit for his characteristic and amiable love of quiet. He is well known as eminently a peace-maker. But why not also proclaim such a *Sabbath* on every other crying sin that flagrantly provokes God and destroys by wholesale the souls of men? And why shall not the silence be the more profound, and the longer, in proportion as the sin is the more glaring, the abomination the more appalling, if that sin involve great numbers and influence, that will not relinquish it short of a desperate struggle, and its removal be thus beset with great difficulties?

Why, if the Puritan city, which is the seat of our friend's pastorate, were in danger of becoming a second Sodom, by the great multiplication of licensed or unlicensed brothels, would he proclaim a *Sabbath* — a long, *long* Sabbath, on the subject? Yet the fearful system of slavery, which annuls the marriage relation, causes, among its other enormities, the whole South to teem with virtual and actual brothels, among its myriads of negro cabins!

A *Sabbath-silence*, on the crowning abomination of the age! How startling the idea! And yet, it is *the favorite idea* of the mass who are the repositories of the dominant influence in America. For many such

personally, I cherish a most heart-felt respect, though compelled to dissent from them on this momentous question. Indeed, knowing not a few of them to be excellent Christians, among whom I number some very dear and estimable personal friends, I hardly need formally disclaim the least invidious reference, by any individual allusion I make here or elsewhere, in the discussion or illustration of a principle.

In the face of such an array of influence — so strong numerically, and still stronger from the high respectability, and yet more, from the eminent religious worth it embraces, how difficult must it be to meet the odium cast upon the luckless head of the adventurous abolitionist, whatever be his character or standing, who dares decidedly to raise his voice against the sin of slavery! Such reckless ones are, in common parlance — yes, in Presidential Inaugurals, and in many a sermon of revered and eloquent divines, branded as *fanatics*, *agitators*, etc., and doubtless regarded by some as *all but accursed*. In these circumstances, we marvel not that some abolitionists have actually *run mad*, under the harrowing provocations of the dead apathy, or the wholesale abuse, which they have had to encounter. But, alas, to how many a temporizer and compromiser might not a few of these stigmatized “fanatics,” with the dauntless Paul, justly appeal: “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

While slavery is thus environed for defense as by a wall of granite — by pulpit, press, and legislative halls, (with a few honorable exceptions,) from the “Christian Mirror” of Maine to the “Christian Observers” of Mason and Dixon’s line, where rests the responsibility of its continuance, and where is the hope of its removal?

“*Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*”

Yes, under the wrath and the odium which slavery so arrogantly and successfully wields — under the blasts and the storms which the avowed friend of the poor African is doomed to encounter, in our *Christian* land, and in many of our Northern churches even, there yet stands forth here and there a champion — a man who dares assert the *Christian axiom* of “*a higher law*” than human statutes, so strangely scouted by our National Congress, and far more strangely still, by many of our religious periodicals, churches, and preachers of righteousness, whose cardinal canon professedly is, that the Bible — the word of God — is the Christian’s rule of faith and practice. These champions are found at the South as well as at the North. And the former shine as much more brightly than the latter, in their honest condemnation of this “stupendous wrong,” as their position is more embarrassing and their motives more disinterested. Listen to the language of an estimable associate of our own, born and reared in a slave State, whose words, in his absence, I may be allowed to quote. In a letter to the speaker, in which he refers to some of the

Northern influences that sustain slavery, he says, "I would not impugn the motives of an editor any more than I would those of my private neighbor; but from what I know of the South, and of the course hitherto pursued by the *New-York Observer* on the subject of slavery, if anti-slavery influences were only such as come from that paper, the slave will clank his chain until the millennium. I think a very solemn responsibility rests on the missionary, to make his influence felt, in all wise and proper ways, against oppression and wrong in all its forms, and in favor of truth and righteousness." And in another letter he says, "In glancing over '*First Things*,' my attention was arrested by some remarks on the subject of slavery, in the sermon entitled, '*First rebellion in the Hebrew Commonwealth*.' The author there takes the ground, that the curse pronounced against Canaan, from whom, I believe, he contends that the African race sprung, fell upon Ham and all his posterity, and will reach, in its blighting influence, even into the millennium. He regards the African race as doomed to perpetual servitude, and says that he would have no compunctions of conscience *now* to be such a slaveholder as Abraham or Job. As I read his remarks, so disparaging and so hopeless with reference to poor Africa, I wished that old St. Augustin might have risen up from his ashes in Hippo, and confronted him face to face. Not a word throughout the whole discourse that would at all touch the conscience of a slaveholder, but the tendency of the whole to wrap him in a deeper slumber. He asks, triumphantly, 'Why do you not tell the slaveholder what to do?' That question has been answered by some scores\* who did not rest until they made their slaves freemen, though it was the result of a plan which required some years for its execution. They are none the poorer to-day, and their sleep is not less sweet. Just in that question hundreds have taken refuge, and not hearing a satisfactory answer, have supposed themselves blameless.

While the South, in not a few of her noble sons, gives such testimony, the North also, in many of hers, keeps not back. There, too, are found champions, who, above the influence of rulers and Pharisees, (I mean simply the repositories of the dominant sway, adopting the phraseology of our text, and with no invidious reference,) are not afraid nor ashamed to be known as the friends of the suffering slave. Contemplate, for instance, the late amiable and profound Prof. B. B. Edwards, when a theological student, admitting a pious black man to be his room-mate, and studying with him at the same table, amid the jeers of some of his fellow-students; and the no less sublime spectacle of the same modest Prof. Edwards firmly resisting the personal solicitation of the great, and we would trust, the *good* Daniel Webster, to indorse his slavery com-

\* The writer's father was one of them.

promise, when, like Samson shorn of his locks, his strength had suddenly left him, by his mistaken espousal for once of the evil cause, and he, a doomed giant, was eagerly casting about to find props to support him. Oh! there was, (as another has said of the sainted Prof. Edwards,) there was a martyr spirit under that mild visage — a spirit that feared not the great nor the learned, where truth and right were involved. The first and the only anti-slavery address to which I ever listened, it was my privilege to hear from his eloquent lips, when he was my college tutor, more than a quarter of a century ago; and the first anti-slavery tract that I ever read, was from his fervid pen, about the same period. I would ask no one to be a more hearty *abolitionist* than was this great and good man, in his retiring, modest, yet decided way, for the last thirty years; and I would not dare to be a less sympathizing friend of the suffering African. The Lord increase the number of such martyr spirits in America, and especially at the North, where rests such fearful responsibility, far more easily discharged than at the South, for the removal of slavery!

IV. *I hold that our beloved native country is in most imminent peril, from the fearful system of American slavery, of falling into deep national disgrace, of calling down upon itself the signal judgments of heaven, and thus of blighting, for a long period, the fairest and the highest hopes of a suffering world.*

If the positions which I have already asserted are tenable, of which I think there can be little reasonable doubt, this follows as matter of course. The majority of good people in America, even at the North, are strangely apathetic or strongly sympathetic on the subject of slavery, and, I fear, more and more so each successive year. And the power and tendency of the system, thus to blind and warp the judgment and the consciences of *good men*, more strikingly than any thing else, reveal its intrinsic subtle wickedness and its wholesale desolating influence. The wakeful, thoroughly determined opposers of the "stupendous wrong," in our country, are comparatively but a handful. The system is confessedly an evil of enormous magnitude, and its removal a most difficult problem, under any circumstances. Add then to the greatness of the evil, and the difficulty of its removal, the general apathy on the subject, on the part of those who are the greatest sufferers from it, (except the poor slaves themselves,) who are in most danger of being overwhelmed by it, and with whom, humanly speaking, rests the power of its abolition, and how fearfully imminent is this peril!

Contemplate the American people, amid their jubilant rejoicings of the morrow, like a mighty gallant ship, coursing proudly and thoughtlessly into the Niagara river, under pressed sail — disdaining every friendly hand or call from either shore, enveloped by the mists and

miasms engendered by the stagnation and corruption which the dark system of slavery creates and sends forth over the length and breadth of our fair inheritance — mists far more dense and bewildering than the lake fog that follows the reckless mariner, or the spray that leaps and soars above the “father of cataracts,” eager to embrace him : Oh ! contemplate that noble ship — its pilot mad — its crew and passengers stupefied — and yet, in their giddy hallucination, esteeming themselves *the only sober ones*, while a gazing, wondering world are all *mistaken, wild, fanatical*, — and thus self-complacently and even *angrily* resisting every remonstrance and entreaty — desperately nearing the fatal falls — blindly bent on *going down* — and we have but a faint emblem of the present attitude, the tendency, and the threatened doom of our loved country, as contemplated by God and angels — yes, and by myriads of philanthropists in our own and in distant lands !

We would not yield to despair. We would trust that the arm of Omnipotence will yet interpose in America for its rescue and salvation. Americans are a chosen people, a royal inheritance. The Lord will not hastily cast them off. But his signal chastisement of his ancient chosen people, should admonish those who would presume too far, in the fond assurance of being the inalienable favorites of heaven. There is such a thing as nations being given over to judicial blindness, in the nineteenth century, as well as in the ages before the Christian era. And if the patriotic, though skeptical Jefferson, could say, in his reprobation of American slavery, “I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just,” what should *we*, as *Christians*, feel and say, as we contemplate that system enormously enlarged, fortified, and extended, since that declaration was made, by the mammoth growth of more than half a century ?

I do not suppose that any one before me questions the correctness of the positions I have taken, viz., that American slavery is the crowning abomination of the nineteenth century — that it is one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, of human obstacles in existence to the progress of the Gospel — that the responsibility of its continuance rests much, if not mainly, with the Northern portion of our country, and especially with the churches and their ministers — and that our beloved native land is in imminent peril from this mighty evil. I have not attempted to adduce elaborate proofs to establish these positions, for the simple reason that such proofs are known to us all.

But the question may naturally arise, what *practical* bearing has this subject, confessedly momentous, with us foreign missionaries ? We all abhor the abomination of slavery, but what can *we do* to hasten its downfall ? I answer, we can all do something, probably much ; and for the proper use of that something, or much, we are just as responsible as we

are for the employment of our time or our tongues, in preaching the Gospel to the Nestorians, or for the faithful use of missionary funds, placed in our hands for the promotion of the same object. We are in far better circumstances correctly to contemplate the evil, in all its magnitude and bearings, than our countrymen at home, the most favored of whom — I mean those the furthest removed from its influence — are still at least in the *penumbra* of its broad and dense obscurity. As a class of men, missionaries also possess an influence, growing out of the hallowed nature of their high calling and what should be their fitness for it, which few other Christians possess. These advantages, arising from the sacred nature of our work, and our position and relations, all belong to Christ and his cause, and as such should be faithfully and scrupulously employed.

We can all *pray* for the downfall of the fearful system of slavery, and we believe in the efficacy of prayer.

We can all drop a word to our correspondents, occasionally, in our letters—not in the spirit of bitter denunciation, but in kind entreaty, yet with all fidelity; at least often enough to remind and impress them, that we do abhor, from the bottom of our hearts, the iniquitous system of American slavery, as a *crimson sin*, and fear not to contravene the influence of rulers and Pharisees — I mean, the dominant sway — no, not of great and even *good* men, arrayed in its favor.

We can also, as occasion may dictate, speak out in a more public manner on this subject.

Tell me not that we are in danger of compromising the welfare of the missionary cause by declaring ourselves the enemies of slavery, and the friends of the bleeding African. The very idea is preposterous — a libel on our high and holy calling. Our calling *is*, necessarily and of course, in heaven-high and heaven-wide antagonism to slavery, and as such should be known and read of all men. The *missionary* — Christ's free-man and Christ's ambassador, is not, and should not be, muzzled in regard to *any sin*, either at home or abroad; and if his connection with any Protestant Missionary Board involve that condition, (which I do not believe to be the case,) I see not how, as a *Christian*, he could consistently assume the relation. For one, I plant myself by the side of the suffering and the oppressed, the world over. They shall have the poor benefit of my humble name, and my feeble pen; and had I a thousand more to offer, gladly would I lay them on that altar, at the feet of THE MAN OF SORROWS, THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR.

Yes, brethren, while as Cowper said of England, in the days of its thralldom in this same mighty evil, we can heartily say of America, "with all thy faults I love thee still," I yet see not how we can, as Christians or as patriots, *forget* those faults, — and especially its "stupendous

wrong,"—or cease to pray and labor for their removal. *We* surely can not forget, in our missionary toils, our trials, our sufferings, our self-denials, and our prayers, in this benighted land, that this whole Nestorian people is more than thirty times outnumbered by the number of immortal souls, in the heart of our dear native country, groaning under the rigors of an iron bondage, and many of them in a far worse condition than those for whose salvation we thus pray and labor. Our charity, our sympathy, and our prayers, may and should *begin* at home, though they stay not there, but go forth and embrace the world.

"Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?"

No, blessed Jesus, with few exceptions of here and there a noble Nicodemus! Thou art still despised and rejected of men. To the *poor* the Gospel is preached. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh—not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world and things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

Here, poor, suffering, bleeding African, is thy charter and thy hope!

We *do* glory, but it is in Christ, and in this precious provision of his Gospel. We would not look to the great, nor the privileged, as *guides* for our principles or our practice. We would go to the Bible and to Calvary. We hold that a prophet *has come out of Galilee*. We would make him *our* prophet, *our* priest, and *our* king. We would implicitly follow, trust, and obey him, and recommend him to others as the only Saviour of a lost world. And if the "stupendous wrong," which we have now so hastily contemplated, be ever removed from our dear, *dear* native land, it will be by the power of the cross of Christ—by the energy of his word, faithfully proclaimed in the ears of men, and set home by his Spirit shed forth in their hearts, convincing them, that to hold their fellow immortals in bondage, or to sanction, or abet, or connive at that practice, is a heaven-provoking sin. Just this grand object would we, in our very humble measure, advance, for the well-being of our loved country, and the salvation of myriads of souls, as precious as our own.

Let us to-day seek to approach that mighty, that compassionate, that suffering Saviour, in a becoming spirit—in love, in tenderness, in humility, and in penitence. If the subject of our meditations is unusual here on the Sabbath, and especially at our communion seasons, I trust it will not be deemed misplaced—particularly, coming as it does, in proximity with an anniversary so deeply interesting to every American, and not the least so, certainly, to every American missionary. With us the subject ceases to be a *political* one, and assumes a strictly and



deeply *religious* character. We contemplate it in the light of that "higher law" to which we have referred. Not politics alone, nor mainly, will ever remove the overwhelming evil, while man is selfish, and slavery is a lucrative system. The light of Heaven must be poured through that "higher law," as through a burning lens, on the darkened, warped human conscience, and work its way outward, thus pervading, reforming, and regenerating the politics that legislate on the subject, and then the work is done. The religious press and the pulpit must thunder on this sin, as loudly and unremittingly as they have ever thundered on the subject of intemperance or of popery. A merely political subject! Then whence the sermons, from venerable divines, in support of the system, like the one to which allusion has to-day been repeatedly made? Whenever the pulpit dares to utter a note in condemnation of it, must the hue-and-cry be raised, that politics are desecrating God's house and God's day, while the welkin may be made to ring every Sabbath in support or palliation of slavery? On this subject the ministers of the Lord Jesus have a solemn responsibility to discharge, with a fidelity that characterized the preaching of the younger President Edwards, and the great Samuel Hopkins, and other kindred spirits of a by-gone and more virtuous generation.

We have, this morning, turned our thoughts to millions of suffering men, women, and children, the purchase of Christ's death, and many of them washed in redeeming blood. We have glanced at a "stupendous wrong," inflicted on them by a Christian nation — a wrong which rears its front to Heaven and cries for vengeance — a crushing impediment to the progress of that kingdom for whose weal the Saviour agonized on Calvary — a wrong, in fact, to the Lord Jesus, wounded, bleeding, and crucified afresh in the house of his friends; themes, not altogether unsuited, certainly, to melt our hearts in tenderness, and swell them with sympathy with the sufferings of our glorified Redeemer, in anticipation of approaching his table. Verily, sackcloth becomes us and our countrymen to-day, and on the morrow, and henceforth, in view of our national guilt, as well as for our individual sins.

May the Saviour meet us in the way of his appointment, and grant to us an antepast of the rest and the bliss of heaven — vouchsafing to us richer measures of his grace, and thus preparing us to meet and discharge, better than we have ever yet done, our high responsibilities as immortal men, as Christians, and as missionaries.—Amen.

## A P P E N D I X .

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### NOTE TO PAGE 7.

THE preacher here doubtless refers to the meeting of the General Assembly which took place *thirty-five* years ago. This body met then at *Philadelphia*, which had always been, and long continued to be, its only place of meeting. The meeting of the General Assembly (O. S.) in 1852, was held at Charleston; and this was the last meeting of which the author, at the time the sermon was delivered, had seen any account.

The following is a copy of the document referred to, taken from the *Assembly's Digest*, Ed. 1820, p. 341.

### A FULL EXPRESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY'S VIEWS OF SLAVERY IN 1818.

"THE committee to which was referred the resolution on the subject of selling a slave, a member of the church, and which was directed to prepare a report to be adopted by the Assembly, expressing their opinion in general on the subject of slavery, reported; and their report being read, was *unanimously* adopted, and referred to the same committee for publication. It is as follows, namely :

"The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, having taken into consideration the subject of SLAVERY, think proper to make known their sentiments upon it to the churches and people under their care.

"We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ, which enjoin that 'all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable, and immortal beings, in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependent on the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall know and worship the true

God ; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the Gospel ; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends ; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity. Such are some of the consequences of slavery—consequences not imaginary, but what connect themselves with its very existence. The evils to which the slave is *always* exposed, often take place in fact, and in their very worst degree and form ; and where all of them do not take place, as we rejoice to say that in many instances, through the influence of the principles of humanity and religion on the minds of masters, they do not, still the slave is deprived of his natural right, degraded as a human being, and exposed to the danger of passing into the hands of a master who may inflict upon him all the hardships and injuries which inhumanity and avarice may suggest.

“From this view of the consequences resulting from the practice into which Christian people have most inconsistently fallen, of enslaving a portion of their *brethren* of mankind—for ‘God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth’—it is manifestly the duty of all Christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors, to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible throughout the world.

“We rejoice that the Church to which we belong commenced as early as any other in this country the good work of endeavoring to put an end to slavery, and that in the same work many of its members have ever since been, and now are, among the most active, vigorous, and efficient laborers. We do indeed tenderly sympathize with those portions of our Church and our country, where the evil of slavery has been entailed upon them ; where a *great* and *the most virtuous part* of the *community* abhor slavery, and wish its extermination as sincerely as any others ; but where the number of slaves, their ignorance, and their vicious habits generally, render an immediate and universal emancipation inconsistent alike with the safety and happiness of the master and the slave. With those who are thus circumstanced, we repeat that we tenderly sympathize. At the same time we earnestly exhort them to continue, and, if possible, to increase their exertions to effect a total abolition of slavery. We exhort them to suffer no greater delay to take place in this most interesting concern, than a regard to the public welfare *truly* and *indispensably* demands.

“As our country has inflicted a most grievous injury on the unhappy Africans, by bringing them into slavery, we can not, indeed, urge that we should add a second injury to the first, by emancipating them in such a manner as that they will be likely to destroy themselves or others.\* But we do think, that our country ought to be governed, in this matter, by no other consideration than an honest and impartial regard to the happiness of the injured party ; uninfluenced by the expense or inconvenience which such a regard may involve.

\* In this false principle of permitting the continued existence of an acknowledged moral evil, we see the cause of the downward course of the Presbyterian Church, on this subject.—[*Editor of the New-York Edition.*]

We therefore warn all who belong to our denomination of Christians, against unduly extending this plea of necessity; against making it a cover for the love and practice of slavery, or a pretense for not using efforts that are lawful and practicable to extinguish the evil.

*"And we at the same time exhort others to forbear harsh censures and uncharitable reflections on their brethren, who unhappily live among slaves whom they can not immediately set free; but who, at the same time, are really using all their influence and all their endeavors to bring them into a state of freedom, as soon as a door for it can be safely opened.*

"Having thus expressed our views of slavery, and of the duty indispensably incumbent on all Christians to labor for its complete extinction, we proceed to recommend—and we do it with all the earnestness and solemnity which this momentous subject demands—a particular attention to the following points.

"We recommend to all our people to patronize and encourage the Society, lately formed, for colonizing in Africa, the land of their ancestors, the free people of color in our country. We hope that much good may result from the plans and efforts of this Society. And while we exceedingly rejoice to have witnessed its origin and organization among the *holders of slaves*, as giving an unequivocal pledge of their desire to deliver themselves and their country from the calamity of slavery; we hope that those portions of the American Union, whose inhabitants are, by a gracious Providence, more favorably circumstanced, will cordially, and liberally, and earnestly coöperate with their brethren in bringing about the great end contemplated.\*

"We recommend to all the members of our religious denomination, not only to permit, but to facilitate and encourage the instruction of their slaves, in the principles and duties of the Christian religion, by granting them liberty to attend on the preaching of the Gospel when they have the opportunity; by favoring the instruction of them in Sabbath-schools, wherever those schools can be formed; and by giving them all other proper advantages for acquiring the knowledge of their duty both to God and man. We are perfectly satisfied, that as it is incumbent on all Christians to communicate religious instruction to those who are under their authority, so the doing of this in the case before us, so far from operating, as some have apprehended that it might, as an excitement to insubordination and insurrection, would, on the contrary, operate as the most powerful means for the prevention of those evils.

"We enjoin it on all Church Sessions and Presbyteries, under the care of this Assembly, to discountenance, and, as far as possible, to prevent, all cruelty of whatever kind in the treatment of slaves; especially the cruelty of separating husband and wife, parents and children; and that which consists in selling slaves to those who will either themselves deprive these unhappy people of the blessings of the Gospel, or who will transport them to places where the Gospel is not proclaimed, or where it is forbidden to slaves to attend upon its institutions. The manifest violation or disregard of the injunction here given, in its true spirit and intention, ought to be considered as just ground for the discipline and

\* This expression of the Assembly's views was made in 1818, before the characteristic aims of the Colonization Society were generally understood, and when it was believed, by most ministers, that its influence would be against slavery. Developments have since been made which show that this was a great mistake, and that its tendencies are in support of slavery.—See writings of Hon. Wm. Jay. Also Stebbins on Colonization.—[*Editor of the New-York Edition.*]

censures of the Church. And if it shall ever happen that a Christian professor in our communion shall sell a slave who is also in communion and good standing with our Church, contrary to his or her will and inclination, it ought immediately to claim the particular attention of the proper church judicature; and unless there be such peculiar circumstances attending the case, as can but seldom happen, it ought to be followed, without delay, by a suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the church, till he repent, and make all the reparation in his power to the injured party.”\*

The following is the unanimous resolution of the Albany Congregational Convention :

“*Resolved*, That in the opinion of this Convention, it is the tendency of the Gospel wherever it is preached in its purity, to correct all social evils, and to destroy sin in all its forms; and that it is the duty of Missionary Societies to grant aid to churches in slave-holding States, in the support of such ministers only as shall so preach the Gospel, and inculcate the principles and application of Gospel discipline, that, with the blessing of God, it shall have its full effect in awakening and enlightening the moral sense in regard to slavery, and in bringing to pass the speedy abolition of that stupendous wrong; and that wherever a minister is not permitted so to preach, he should, in accordance with the directions of Christ in such cases, ‘depart out of that city.’”

\* So long as the Church permits the great cruelty and sin of *Slaveholding*, it will be in vain for her to attempt, or to recommend acts of discipline for the incidental cruelties and scandals (including the slave traffic) that grow out of it. The history of the Presbyterian Church proves this.—[*Editor of the New-York Edition.*]

## SUPPLEMENT TO THE APPENDIX.

BY THE EDITOR OF THE NEW-YORK EDITION.

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in 1794, occupied a higher ground than the preceding. In a note to the 142d question of the larger Catechism in the Confession of Faith, they said :

"1. Tim. 1 : 10. 'The law was made for *men stealers*.' This crime, among the Jews, exposed the perpetrators of it to capital punishment. Exodus 21 : 16, and the Apostle here classes them with sinners of the first rank. The word he uses, in its original import, comprehends all who are concerned in bringing any of the human race into slavery, *or retaining them in it*. Stealers of men are those who bring off slaves or freemen, or KEEP, SELL, or BUY THEM. 'To steal a freeman,' says Grotius, 'is the highest kind of theft. In other instances, we only steal human property, but when we steal or *retain* men in slavery, we seize those who, in common with ourselves, are constituted by the original grant, lords of the earth.' Gen. 1 : 28."

The same General Assembly of 1818, that adopted the "Full expression of views," which we have copied, directed *the erasure of this Note of 1794*.

In 1838 the Assembly was divided into two bodies. After this, the "Old School" Assembly has taken no new action against slavery or its "abuses." In 1838, they declined discussing the subject. In 1843, they laid anti-slavery memorials on the table without reading. In 1845, they said they could not treat slavery as necessarily a sin, "without charging the apostles of Christ with conniving at such sin." "For the Assembly to make slaveholding a bar to communion would be to dissolve itself." In 1850, in reply to a courteous communication from the General Association of Connecticut expressing the conviction that the cause of religion required the removal of slavery, they declared that such action was "offensive, and must lead to an interruption of the correspondence which subsists between the Association, and the General Assembly."

The "New School" Assembly has twenty slaveholding Presbyteries, between one and two hundred ministers, and from fifteen to twenty thousand members, in the slave States, all walking in religious fellowship with slaveholders.

In 1850, at Detroit, the Assembly adopted the following Resolution :

"That the holding of our fellow-men in the condition of slavery, *except* in those cases where it is unavoidable by the laws of the state, by the obligations

of guardianship, or the demands of humanity, is an offense in the proper import of that term, as used in the Book of Discipline, Chap. 1, Sect. 3, and should be treated in the same manner as other offenses."

This was reaffirmed, at the meeting of the Assembly at Buffalo, and "to correct misapprehensions which may exist in many Northern minds, and allay causeless irritation," &c. &c., the Presbyteries in the slave states were requested to send to the next Assembly full statements touching the following points:

(1.) The number of slaveholders in connexion with the churches under their jurisdiction, and the number of slaves held by them.

(2.) The extent to which slaves are held by an unavoidable necessity "imposed by the laws of the states, the obligations of guardianship, and the demands of humanity."

(3.) Whether a practical regard, such as the word of God requires, is evinced by the Southern churches for the sacredness of the conjugal and parental relations, as they exist among slaves; whether baptism is duly administered to the children of slaves professing Christianity; whether slaves are admitted to equal privileges and powers in the Church Courts; and, in general, to what extent, and in what manner, provision is made for the religious well-being of the enslaved."

This, after a long and excited discussion, was adopted by a vote of 84 to 39. Non liquet, 1. [See "Slavery and Anti-Slavery," pp. 107-8—151-162. Ar. Rep. Am. and For. A.-S. Soc. pp. 66-84.—Minutes of General Assembly. (N. S.) 1853.]

PREMIUM TRACT. "*American Slavery a formidable obstacle to the conversion of the world.*" By WILLIAM GOODELL. New-York: Published by the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 48 Beekman street.—Price 6 cents, \$3.00 per hundred.

The Church at Lahaina, (Sandwich Islands) forwarded to the Executive Committee of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, to be awarded as a premium for the best tract on the subject above-mentioned. A majority of a committee, of whom Hon. Wm. Jay was chairman, awarded the premium to the writer of the above Tract.

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